



TESTIMONY OF
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ON BEHALF OF
CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT
AND
MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SUB COMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, HOMELAND SECURITY, AND
INVESTIGATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

“State and Local Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism”

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Chairman Sensenbrenner, we are grateful for this opportunity to address a growing threat across our Nation. Ranking member Lee, let me thank you for appearing at our recent meeting in Washington and I bring regards from my colleague and your own Chief in Houston.

Chairman Goodlatte, we thank you for attending this meeting of your Subcommittee, as this demonstrates your commitment and deep concern. Ranking Member Conyers and distinguished Members, today I speak for the Major Cities Chiefs of Police, representing the 67 largest cities in the Nation, as well as my own department and city. Sheriff Stanek and I appear before you to represent every major urban area, and the majority of the American population. Preventing terrorism and protecting the public are our top priorities, and we thank you today on behalf of the public we are sworn to protect.

I am the Chief of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, with nearly 2,000 officers and jurisdiction over the largest city in North Carolina. Our county is home to nearly a million citizens and the Nation's second largest financial center. Our community includes a multitude of Fortune 500 companies, cultural landmarks and the headquarters or major hub for extensive critical infrastructure. Terrorism is a real threat that we face every day – both the Sheriff and I face threats of attack at public shopping malls in our communities.

Domestic terrorism is prevalent. It's not something that is simply going to disappear. To truly eradicate extremism in the United States and abroad, well thought out actions and established precautionary measures must be taken. As the number and variety of terrorism incidents and cases shows, violent extremism can be found everywhere – not only in cities like New York, Chicago or Los Angeles. Also where you may not expect to find it, in communities like my own Charlotte or as my colleague describes today, Minneapolis.

We have a responsibility to our Nation's people to keep them safe and to our children so that they can grow up in a country where they don't live in constant fear of violent extremism. Countering Violent Extremism, or CVE, involves diligence in making sure we are aware of those who have been radicalized and what their potential is to carry out threats.

This threat has evolved from the central core of Al Qaida, to diverse 'Lone Wolf' style threats, and now to the threat of foreign fighters travelling to and from the United States with military style training. These fighters, as American citizens, permanent residents, or the citizens of countries that are traditionally considered safe travelers pose a highly dangerous threat to our Nation. They fit no stereotype, they have the freedom of movement to visit anywhere, and they possess battle hardened training that makes them the ideal candidate to commit a terrorist act on the Homeland. North Carolina has not been immune.



Home-grown Terrorists

In our state, one of the more recent examples of domestic terrorism involved Donald Morgan of Salisbury, North Carolina. Morgan didn't favor well in the army or in his law enforcement career due to bad life decisions. He eventually converted to Islam, became radical, and started posting messages on social media outlets in support of terrorism. Eventually he tried to join an extremist group before being arrested for gun trafficking.

No one can really say what will lead someone to turn his or her back on our country and pledge allegiance to violent extremism. Therefore, it is our job as law enforcement professionals to do everything in our power to capture self-radicalized individuals on the front end before it is too late.

Foreign Ties to the Homeland

In 2014, two North Carolina extremists were Akba Jordan and Basit Sheikh. Jordan, 22, of Raleigh, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists. Jordan and co-defendant Avin Marsalis Brown, 21, also of Raleigh, were arrested on March 19, 2014, and charged initially in a criminal complaint. On April 1, 2014, a federal grand jury returned an indictment charging Jordan and Brown with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists.

On March 19, 2014, Brown was arrested at Raleigh Durham International Airport prior to boarding a flight with a final destination in Turkey. Brown intended to travel from Turkey into Syria. Once overseas, he was to meet with a member of ISIS whom he had befriended online. Once established, and after Jordan had obtained his own passport and enough funds to purchase a ticket, Brown could then assist Jordan in entering Syria from Turkey to additionally join Brown.

Foreign Fighters in the Homeland

Another example of terrorism here at home involved Basit Javed Sheikh. On November 5, 2013, a federal grand jury in Raleigh returned an indictment charging Sheikh with attempting to provide material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization.

The indictment charges that Sheikh attempted to provide material support and resources to Jabhat al-Nusrah which the United States Secretary of State has identified as an alias name for al Qaeda in Iraq, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. The affidavit describes multiple Facebook postings by Sheikh since April, 2013, expressing support for al-Nusrah which has claimed responsibility for nearly 600 attacks in Syria that have killed numerous innocent civilians. Sheikh reached out to the covert FBI employee and expressed his desire to travel to Syria in order to "help the mujahedeen...in any way I can." When asked how he wanted to help, Sheikh responded "logistics, media, fight too, God willing."



Despite the FBI covert employee stating to Sheikh that fighting was not for everyone, Sheikh informed the FBI covert employee that he was “serious” and that he was ready to be a martyr. On November 2, 2013, Sheikh traveled to Raleigh-Durham Airport, and was arrested prior to boarding his flight.

Role of the Internet

One of our early cases remains an example to this day. Charlotte resident Samir Khan is an illustration of the terrorist threat in our homeland, and the role of the internet. While the case of Mr. Khan predates the formation of ISIL, Mr. Khan’s story shows how far back the tentacles of racialization may reach. Mr. Khan travelled to Yemen after living in Charlotte and founded AQAP’s *Inspire Magazine*. While Samir Khan was killed several years ago, his magazine continues to be published to this day with information for domestically based extremists to execute attacks. Widely read and very professional in appearance, his internet-based magazine has included information on how to build specialty bombs and has targeted high profile venues.

We are not going to win this fight with traditional methods and each of the cases I have cited are examples of radicalization and training via the internet. Law enforcement agencies need tech savvy staff who can quickly digest information in real time. Additionally, they need to help us in getting ahead of ever evolving technology while at the same time assist us in pushing out counter messages of extremism.

The obvious pattern with the referenced cases is use of the internet to become a self-radical and a clear desire to travel abroad in support of international terrorism. Radicals have a common thread of wanting a cause to believe in and a sense of belonging to a larger, well established entity.

Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF)

Countering violent extremism requires that we execute strategies which involve an unwavering trust among agencies involved in the fight. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) has a strong relationship with our agency partners in sharing information on CVE. Each of the cases I have noted were joint operations that included Federal, State and local agencies. Every one of them was truly a team effort.

CMPD is fortunate to work with a knowledgeable group of men and women who represent 44 local, state and Federal agencies on the Charlotte Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). This is a phenomenal collaboration with Federal, state, and local partners. No one agency can do it alone.

Charlotte JTTF has been extremely successful with CVE. One of the most effective tools we have for thwarting plots is sharing of information. The benefit of being a part of JTTF is that it allows for the free flow of information on potential threats between agency partners.



As chief, my role on JTTF is to ensure that CMDP shares its resources in helping to identify potential threats. Our task force members have been able to leverage their positions in helping us identify homegrown threats.

Community Resolve

While JTTF efforts have been successful, we know it doesn't stop there. Domestic terrorists aren't necessarily out in the open. They hide behind cyber walls while spreading their messages of destruction and terror. The face of domestic extremists varies as there is a wide range of economical, geographical and age factors. They all look different. The only commonality is the use the internet to spread violent extremism. Our greatest protection for the public is the public itself. Local police and sheriffs are engaged with their communities to detect and prevent violent extremism at the most early stages of radicalization, before it becomes criminal and becomes another case at the JTTF. When we build relationships of trust with the community, we learn about persons who may pose a threat to public safety before it is too late. Chiefs and Sheriffs have built strong partnerships with the public we serve - to stop extremism in all forms.

Criminal Intelligence Enterprise

Charlotte stands with our sister metropolitan areas in addressing this pervasive threat. As a member of the Major Cities Chiefs, we are participating in the Criminal Intelligence Enterprise (CIE) which is recognized in the 2015 Appropriations Bill. CIE is a local threat identification and assessment process that helps police agencies determine their priority criminal threats. Standardized protocols are used by criminal intelligence units and fusion centers to determine and substantiate their criminal threats and their intelligence collection needs. This program is particularly salient to identifying and preventing violent extremism.

Fusion Centers and DHS

Through funding provided by a partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, Chiefs and Sheriffs of this Nation are better enabled to counter the extremist threat and better able to coordinate criminal intelligence matters. This could not happen without DHS and regional fusion centers. We are thankful to Congress for supporting this program via the appropriations process and to the Department of Homeland Security for providing the portal platform from which this program will expand. Major Cities Chiefs Association maintains a Homeland Security Committee that coordinates our efforts to disseminate best practices, coordinate police operations, interaction with our Federal partners and to address new and rising concerns such as ISIL. We believe strongly that fusion centers and DHS must be equal partners in all aspects of our work. Without them we do not have a comprehensive strategy.



Stronger Information Sharing

Following the Boston Marathon bombings, the House looked into information sharing at JTTFs. Learning lessons from gaps in information sharing in Boston, Chiefs and Sheriffs have sought to build a stronger JTTF process. Major Cities Chiefs addressed a list of concerns with FBI Director Comey and we have engaged the FBI in an ongoing dialogue to strengthen information sharing. I am pleased to report to the Subcommittee that the FBI responded to our specific concerns with a directive to all field offices implementing critical policy changes. Speaking for Charlotte and my own region, I can assure members of the Subcommittee that information sharing has never been more effective. Is it always perfect? Of course not. But our teamwork is stronger than ever before. The cases I have cited today are examples of a law enforcement community that is resourceful and united in our commitment to protect the public.

The Way Forward

Terrorism is no longer something that we only hear about in other countries. It is here, right in our own backyards or even residing at our next door neighbor's house. Countering violent extremism is our most viable options to keeping our citizens and country safe from those who would see us suffer and die.

We must build upon increasing awareness, communication, and inter-agency cooperation in order to propel the CVE strategy to its highest potential. Then and only then will we be one step closer to erasing terrorism and achieving the ultimate dream of peace and a much safer world for the generations to come.

Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Lee, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee - those of us on the front lines look to you for leadership and support. Local law enforcement is charged with the solemn duty to discover, disrupt and stop plots hatched within the U.S. Please know that my colleagues and I are committed to the goal shared by each of you – the prevention of all crimes, terrorist plots, and threats to the homeland including the interdiction of those who would bring us harm. We need your continued help to be successful, and I look forward to working with both the Subcommittee and the full Committee in the future.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.